Programme’s name: The voucher system for personal assistance

Organisation / Country: Municipality of Stenungsund / Sweden

Website: [Here](#)

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Summary: The policy context
Since 1994, the Act Concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments (LSS) has offered the opportunity for people with specific disabilities and an extensive need of support to access personal assistance or assistance benefit. Personal assistants (PAS) help people with disabilities on a one-to-one basis to carry out personal tasks. After being assessed by social services, the service user is entitled to a certain amount of hours of personal assistance and is able to choose whether or not this service is provided by the municipality or a private company. The service user can also create his/her own company and hire personal assistants directly.

Target group:
- Service users with ‘permanent and lasting needs’ such as autism, physical, sensory and intellectual disabilities as well as those with long-term health conditions.
- No age restriction: both children and adults are eligible. However, people who become disabled over the age of 65 are currently not covered.
- The persons should live in their own accommodation.
- Only people that need support for specific basic needs in daily life (hygiene, dressing and undressing, eating, communication, etc.).

Personal assistants are professionals with particular competences to cover a broad range of tasks. In 2014, 19,300 workers were registered as PA.
The municipality and the national Social Insurance Agency conduct a needs assessment and determine the number of hours of assistance required. Assessment takes the form of an open-ended interview with the service user and is followed up at least every two years. The needs assessment also involves an investigation from professionals (GP, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, etc.) to gather evidence on the person’s capability and his degree of autonomy. If a person does not agree with the result of the assessment, the person may appeal to a civil court.

The scheme essentially functions as a voucher system: instead of allocating money to purchase services and support, the service user is allocated a number of hours per week. The municipality funds the first 20 hours, the Social Insurance Agency takes responsibility beyond the 20 hours. All service users receive a nationally unique amount (approximately EUR 31/hour) to spend on the care they require.

**Issues:**

- **Expenditures:** Theoretically, the number of hours can be unlimited, since people with severe injuries or impairments may need more than one assistant at the same time (no ceiling). There are persons with 24 hours per day assistance to allow them to live on their own.
- **Control possibility:** the municipality has the responsibility for 20 hours per week.
- **Quality discussion:** determining, achieving and maintaining the quality of care remains a challenge.

How service users employ PA? (in %)

Data from 2013

- Municipality: 40%
- Private companies: 10%
- Cooperatives: 3%
- Own company: 47%
### Resources/budget:
- At national level:
  - EUR 476 million to Swedish Local authorities (2009)
  - EUR 2.1 billion from the National government (2009)
  - The municipality is financially responsible for those who need assistance for less than 20 hours a week.

### Objectives:
- Enabling people to live independently in their home

### Outcomes:
- Improving independence and autonomy
- Enhancing self-determination
- Ensuring full participation
- Achieving higher equality in living conditions
- Guaranteeing better quality of service through service integration: support was often provided by a large number of different people coming and going in the home
- Providing person-centered support to individuals

### Evaluation:
The voucher system gets regularly assessed, among others through the regular exchange with service users on their level of personal satisfaction and through feedback surveys.